

# Roundabout

May 2020 £1

*Your meeting in print*



*Special Themed Issue:*  
**Courage to Change**

# THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were *wrong promptly admitted it*.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



## Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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Set cameras or Smartphones to High Definition, Highest or Ultra Quality. **The MINIMUM picture file size is 2MB, but bigger is ok too!**

Please email to Julie Fox at GSO, with your name and address for acknowledgement (if published): **AAShare@gso.gb.org.uk**

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**or by e-mail to:**

**roundabout@aamail.org**

Articles and letters will be attributed to 'Anonymous' if the writer wishes, but the original submission to the Editor should include name, address and telephone number (these details will not be published).

The Editor cannot guarantee to publish all materials submitted or return contributed matter. Payment for any submissions cannot be made.

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**Payments and administrative enquiries should be sent to:**

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10 Toft Green  
York YO1 7NJ**

Telephone enquiries can be made between 10am and 2pm  
Monday to Friday on 01904 644026

# **Editorial**

Half way through March, when the Roundabout Sub-Committee (RSC) were well into the production of May's edition, we took the decision to change direction. The world had changed so significantly that we felt the articles in place suddenly did not reflect this new reality we all find ourselves in.

Therefore, this issue of Roundabout is based loosely around the theme of 'Courage to Change'. As a Fellowship the 'live show' is a much cherished element of our toolkit for living a 'normal', sober life but for the foreseeable future that option is no longer open to us. Within this issue are examples of the other ways we can communicate and more importantly, still reach out our hand to the still suffering alcoholic.

An extract from the 12 and 12 reminds us that with God's help and by working the 12 Steps we can face our current situation with faith rather than fear. A number of articles concentrate on how individual groups have responded to closures by going online. Also included are two articles from a sponsor and her sponsee describing how Covid-19 was not going to get in the way of Step work!

An article from the Grapevine has also been reprinted as it concentrates on another mode of communication which people may prefer to use in this time of uncertainty – the telephone.

For nearly 70 years Roundabout has been described as a meeting for those who could not get to a meeting. For the first time ever that now applies to all of us. The RSC thank those members who responded so quickly over the last few days by writing in and it seems fitting to note that the message contained in the reprinted Roundabout article from July 1985 is as true today as it was 35 years ago – writing into Roundabout is a way of doing service.

Putting your experience, strength and hope onto paper ensures that the hand of friendship still reaches the still suffering alcoholic. That has never been so important as it is now.

**Editor's note: extract from Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Step Twelve, pg 116.**

Without necessarily taking that first drink, we often get quite far off the beam. Our troubles sometimes begin with indifference. We are sober and happy in our A.A. work. Things go well at home and office. We naturally congratulate ourselves on what later proves to be a far too easy and superficial point of view. We temporarily cease to grow because we feel satisfied that there is no need for *all* of A.A.'s Twelve Steps for us. We are doing fine on a few of them. Maybe we are doing fine on only two of them, the First Step and that part of the Twelfth where we "carry the message." In A.A. slang, that blissful state is known as "two-stepping." And it can go on for years.

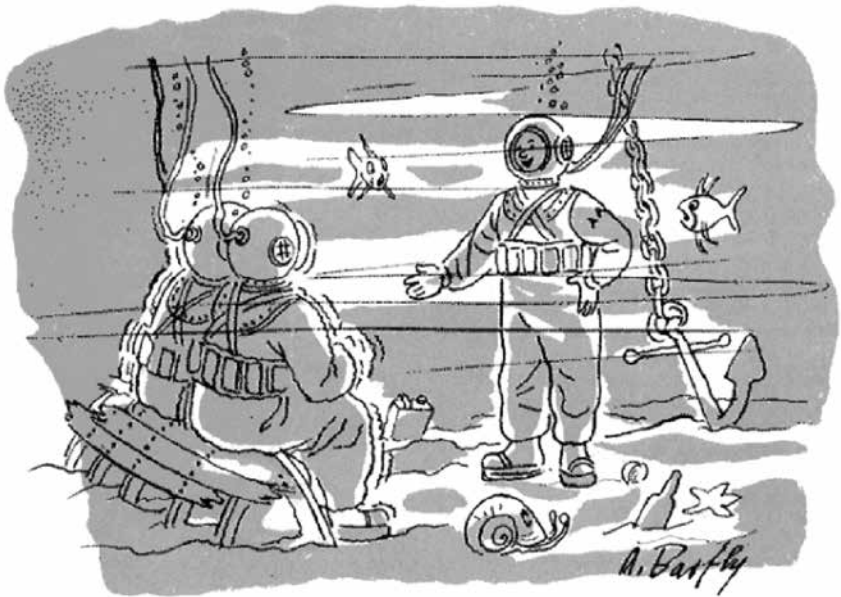
The best-intentioned of us can fall for the "two-step" illusion. Sooner or later the pink cloud stage wears off and things go disappointingly dull. We begin to think that A.A. doesn't pay off after all. We become puzzled and discouraged.

Then perhaps life, as it has a way of doing, suddenly hands us a great big lump that we can't begin to swallow, let alone digest. We fail to get a worked-for promotion. We lose that good job. Maybe there are serious domestic or romantic difficulties, or perhaps that boy we thought God was looking after becomes a military casualty.

What then? Have we alcoholics in A.A. got, or can we get, the resources to meet these calamities which come to so many? These were problems of life which we could never face up to. Can we now, with the help of God as we understand Him, handle them as well and as bravely as our non-alcoholic friends often do? Can we transform these calamities into assets, sources of growth and comfort to ourselves and those about us? Well, we surely have a chance if we switch from "two-stepping" to "twelve-stepping," if we are willing to receive that grace of God which can sustain and strengthen us in any catastrophe.

Our basic troubles are the same as everyone else's, but when an honest effort is made "to practice these principles in all our affairs," well-grounded A.A.'s seem to have the ability, by God's grace, to take these troubles in stride and turn them into demonstrations of faith.

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*“You can hardly go anywhere nowadays without bumping into an A.A.”*

**Editor’s note: Below, an article taken from the Roundabout Magazine: July 1985.**

## **POWER OF EXAMPLE**

Through my attendance at many meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, I came to realise that I was alcoholic, and had been from my early teens. Although I realise today that my life had been unmanageable, virtually from the time when I started drinking, it wasn’t until I reached my late 20s that I finally threw in the towel and accepted that my life was totally unmanageable because I was alcoholic, and suffered from an incurable disease called alcoholism.

It was the power of example that was instrumental in me getting sober. My father was first. Although he is not a member of AA, I noticed a dramatic change for the better in both his and mother’s lives. As slowly but surely happiness and contentment crept back into them, totally due to my father’s leaving the first fatal drink alone. It was his action, and the responsible actions of many good examples within our Fellowship, which have helped me to stay sober for over four years, working the programme on a daily basis. That is indeed a miracle for me, because during the latter stages of my illness, hardly a day went by without my having some form of alcohol in my bloodstream.

Through the example of my staying sober and leading a fairly responsible life, my brother is now two years sober, my wife's cousin is 18 months sober, and one of my neighbours has been fortunate enough to find our Fellowship.

I'll never forget what made me decide to give AA a try. It was through an AA member sharing his experience, strength and hope with me on paper. It was from his article that I got the identification that I required for me to take that first life-saving Step, and admit that my life was totally unmanageable and that I was powerless over alcohol, in any shape or form.

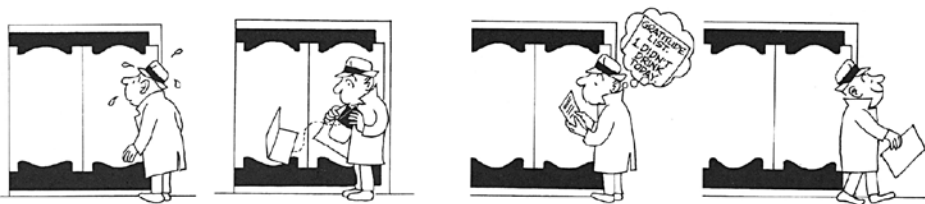
I will be forever grateful to that individual for taking the time and making the effort to share with me on paper. It certainly makes it clear to me just how important it is to put pen to paper and share with others, because I've no doubt that his responsible act helped to save my life. Both myself and my wife (who is not alcoholic) enjoy reading Roundabout, and she is equally aware of how important it is for recovering alcoholics to share on paper.

I would like to conclude by thanking all you recovering alcoholics who have afforded Roundabout some of your time to share with me. I can't over-emphasise just how important it is for me to read how you are coping with life today without booze. There are also many less fortunate alcoholics who rely solely on Roundabout for their recovery. I hope that you are not one of the people who continually leave it to others to write in! If you are, friend, please 'act positive' and do something to remedy the situation now. Roundabout plays a very important role in this alcoholic's recovery.

Yours in fellowship

**Eddie K**

**East Kilbride Claremount Sunday Afternoon Group**





## **The Fellowship Is Still Around Me**

I don't remember much about my first meeting. No, I wasn't drunk. I was one day sober. On walking in I was greeted by several people and asked if it was my first meeting. I was given coffee, a welcome pack, offered a seat and told what was going to happen. What did happen was that I sat and cried all through the meeting. No one said I couldn't. I was comforted and told it would be okay. Several people told me I would be fine and to come to as many meetings as I could. Other than that I don't remember much.

When I got home I felt a little strange. I'm not one to cry easily. Only later did I realise that they were tears of relief. Relief that I was in the right place. Relief that I didn't have to go on the way I was. Relief that I was with people who understood what was wrong with me. The realisation that I was in the right place and that I could get better with the help of the Fellowship was overwhelming. The changes in my life in the short time I have been coming to AA are fantastic.

Even now, in this most unusual of times, the Fellowship is still around me. My group members are on social media every day and on the phone when they can be, offering advice, encouragement and support. I have had offers of assistance from several people who are happy to help anyone in difficulties.

Online meetings have sprung up all over the place as well and I can drop into a meeting at any time now I'm at home. This is very rewarding as we are all in the same boat and coping in different ways. Isolation is not good for sobriety but these meetings bring hope and fellowship when most needed.

Doing what is suggested, ODAAT, has been the most rewarding thing I have ever done. With the help of my group and the friends I have made in AA I intend to keep doing them to the best of my ability. I love being in recovery and I love Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Donald**

***Wishaw Thursday Night Meditation Group***

***Submit your article to [roundabout@aamail.org](mailto:roundabout@aamail.org)***

## Deja Vu

When I was about three years sober I visited Fuerteventura. Due to great sponsorship, meetings, fellowship and being able to completely give myself to a simple Programme, I was able to take a holiday in safety. You had all told me AA was everywhere, however it was not. Not here, anyway. I decided to move over to start a meeting. I think some suspected I was naive and might not make it but I had family there to support me. With a briefcase packed full of books, literature and videos off I went. I was a young AA with a mission.

I was there from 1995 to 2007 and tried opening a meeting intermittently during that time. In the late 90s online chat started but it was in the old dial up days with slow connections, endless amounts of search engines and meetings opened and closed. I would often find myself alone for hours in a room usually named 'Friends of Bill W'. I would get excited when someone finally appeared. A friend I was yet to meet? Nope, just a person with a passing interest. "Who is Bill W?" they might ask, then soon disappear as I began to explain.

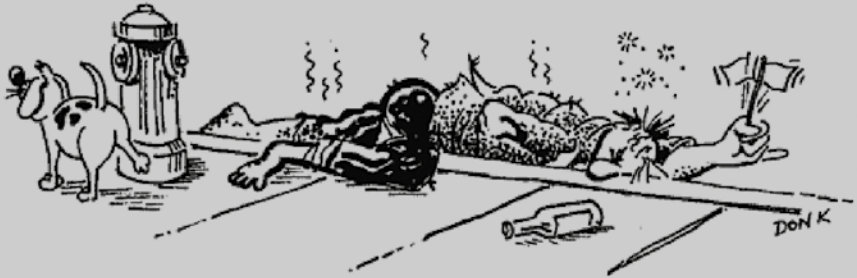
All the while I was studying my Big Book and phoning friends from phone boxes with a handful of coins. People were sending Roundabouts and Shares and I was getting emails and the odd visitor as I was an English speaking contact for a European AA site. I made it to meetings whenever I travelled on short trips over to Lanzarote or Tenerife or when visiting home and further afield.

People often asked me how I managed to stay sober, stating they could not do it without regular meetings. Well, guess what? You can. I'm the proof. I could not have done it without the Power and I could not have done it without the People. I was not avoiding meetings; there just weren't any. Instead, I was using all that was available. We adapt. It is in our DNA. Yes, the physical rooms are closed at the moment. What do we have instead? Phones, email, paper and pen, online groups and so on and so on...

I survived before because I grabbed everything available with both hands. Please do the same now and until I can hug you in body, allow me to hug you in mind. ((Hugs))

**Carl M**

***Drybridge Wednesday***



Some have lower bottoms than others...

## Came To Believe

I always believed in 'a Power greater than' myself. The challenge I had with Step Two was the phrase 'return us to sanity'. Was I insane? I never thought I was that bad! I acted rationally most of the time. I had a pretty much conventional life. There were no visits to psychiatric wards or prisons. Was my drinking insane?

I think I knew then and I certainly know now that it was. Knowing drink was eventually going to ruin everything but being resigned to let it happen again and again could be classed as insane, I think. My thinking and my actions were also not the behaviour you would associate with a sane, rational individual.

So who could restore me to sanity? A lot of people had tried to convince me that my drinking was having a negative impact but my thought processes couldn't absorb the connection and while I was drinking that was unlikely to change. The question was, how could I get to that point?

I believe I had to be spiritually broken and a feeling of helplessness had to pervade me to allow my thinking to change. Only then could I listen and get hope. Not from family members or friends but from people who had had the same experience. The evidence was there in front of me at my first meeting.

**Gerry**  
***Milnathort/Kinros***

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## Good Guidance Is The Key

My name is William and I am an alcoholic. Getting to AA was easy as I had a cousin who was in the Fellowship and did not hesitate to bring me when I finally asked for help. I was sick of the blackouts but more than that I was sick of that feeling in the pit of my stomach when I woke up each morning after a 'couple of cans' the night before. I knew I had upset someone or done something I shouldn't have or said something I shouldn't have. Sometimes I had the feelings even when nothing had happened and while that was a great relief at such times, it only fuelled my head and thinking that I had this under control, which was very far from the truth.

Coming through the doors and learning what I actually suffered from showed me that this was an illness. That explanation is not just a cop out or an excuse as I once thought. I believe the key for me getting better, a day at a time, was the guidance and direction from my sponsor, fellow group members and the good friends I have made in the Fellowship.

Then there is the Programme of Recovery and my Higher Power whom I still don't fully understand but I don't try to dissect that anymore. All I know is it does for me what I couldn't do for myself and that was to stay stopped. Living life on life's terms was always a thing I struggled with but after coming to AA life is a lot easier to live. I have all the tools at my disposal to use whenever I want but it is up to me whether I use them or not. Good guidance is the key for me.

**William**

***Hamilton Recovery through Action Monday***

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### **IT'S EASIER THAN EVER NOW TO SEND US AN ARTICLE**

Visit our national website at:

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

and navigate through AA Members Area > Fellowship Magazines >  
Roundabout Magazine > Roundabout Flyer > this link.

Type your  
article directly into the blank field then click 'Submit Article'.



**I am responsible.  
When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,  
I want the hand of AA always to be there.  
And for that: I am responsible.**

## **The Moment We Say, “No Never!”**

As I sat tonight on a video call with my sponsee, going through Step Six (no, I never thought I would say those words a week ago either!) we reached the end of the reading in our 12 by 12's and the final paragraph starts with the words in the title above.

We are a week into 'lockdown' and just like my alcoholism, I didn't fully appreciate the impacts and effects of Covid-19 until it personally hurt me and until I lost the thing that was most important to me – my face-to-face AA meetings. As I read the messages coming in to tell me local meetings near me were closing down for safety or access reasons, that once familiar feeling of panic in the pit of my stomach started to rise. But, the difference today, rather than seven years ago when I came into AA, is that I now have a Programme, a way to deal with whatever life throws at me. To be fair it's thrown a whole heap of other rubbish at me too, recently!

During my relatively short time in recovery I'd tried a couple of online meetings. I was one of those people that proclaimed “...they're not for me. I prefer the face-to-face” but when it was apparent that all meetings were going to be closed due to the UK lockdown, I knew that there was a way I could repay the kindness of AA. That same AA that just over seven years ago gave me a hope that I had never experienced before.

I know people locally that have been sober longer than I've been alive. People who got sober before mobile phones, house phones, the internet; let alone social media and camera phones. These are all things that, like many, I use in my daily life. The least I could do was to help set up our local meetings online and give those that were new to the tech the opportunity to try it – and they did!

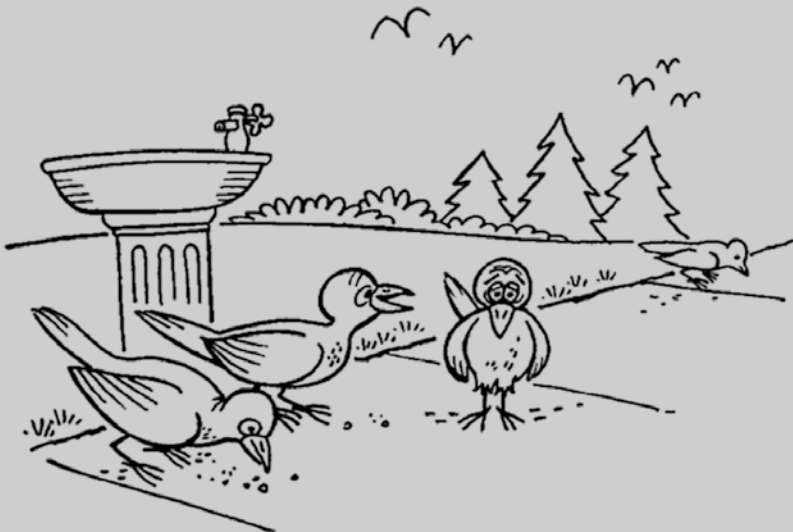
It was emotional to see nearly all of our local members on a screen (or dialled in) that first night we went 'online'. I don't think it was just reflected in my voice. You could hear the relief from everyone that we were all at a meeting and able to listen to each other's shares. They were all there. The gent that took

the first meeting I ever went to. Another chap from my home group, clowning around as normal. The lovely lady who was the kind voice when I phoned the AA Helpline and numerous really special AA friends.

Twice this week I've also done Step work with my sponsee over the phone using video calling and that sums it all up for me. Just because some unimaginable global crisis stops everything in our daily lives, it shouldn't stop our AA Programme and it's not going to. My sponsee has spent many months working hard through her Steps and had just finished Steps Four and Five a short time ago. We'd been looking forward to getting 'into action' with Step Six and beyond and a virus is not going to stop that.

Within a couple of weeks everything I took for granted has gone (temporarily). Let's not be overly dramatic. It's not forever but I can and have had the courage to embrace the changes required to continue to stay sober. Rather than feel sorry for myself I've found new ways to access AA and helped others to do it too. The power of AA has really pulled together in the past seven days. Meetings have converted into online versions and the true meaning of Fellowship has shone brightly. It's flipping awesome!

**Cath W**  
*Boat of Garten*



*"Have you talked to your sponsor lately?"*

## Working The Steps Despite Covid-19

My name's Becca and I'm an alcoholic. In my second year in AA things had been getting unbearable. I was in so much pain with depression and anxiety that I couldn't function in my day to day life. With every day that went by my mind was more and more flooded with thoughts of how I was going to organise my suicide and when I came up against complications which meant my plans wouldn't come together I felt defeated. In those moments my mind turned back to drinking. If I couldn't end it all in a physical sense I decided I would escape by drinking instead. It was exhausting feeling so trapped in a life I couldn't cope with. Alcoholic drinking had been my life for so long that I felt totally unprepared for dealing with life in reality. I needed it all to stop.

Luckily, I came clean to someone. In AA I've been told that when I want to drink I have to tell someone. This is always the last thing I want to do because my illness tells me if I tell someone then I won't be able to drink. By speaking up I foil my own plans.

That inward battle between my alcoholism and the part of me that wants to stay sober is very similar to the battle between my suicidal thoughts and the thoughts of wanting the pain to stop but not by ending my life. It was this realisation that let me see that I needed to blow my cover on that as well.

I was full of guilt when I spoke up about my extensive plans for ending my life and was expecting torrents of anger and rage to be spilled when I admitted it. Instead, I was met with understanding and loving concern. I was pointed in the right direction for help and got an appointment with my GP that week and my sponsor swiftly jumped in to ramp up my Step work.

We had been working our way through Steps 4 and 5 but the pain of seeing my past behaviour in black and white had caused me to slow right down; a crucial error, I see now. Once I had put myself under the care of my doctor, the fog started to lift and I was eager to continue.

But while we were doing that, news of Covid-19 was beginning to filter through. At my work the company issued training about health measures which I thought was a bit over the top. As the days went by though it became more and more apparent that it was not an overreaction. Quite quickly AA meetings began to close their doors in response to the health crisis and I could no longer meet with my sponsor to do the Step work I had just returned to.

Being the adaptive person that she is, my sponsor suggested we continued what we were doing by phone and by using text messages. It was good but not having the visual connection while sharing my Step 5 and also because I wasn't getting the live show at meetings meant I was starting to feel disconnected from what I was sharing. That was when she suggested sharing over video message and it's been amazing! I felt like my sponsor was right in the room with me and I have now finally finished my Step 5.

Being someone who isn't the best at technology I was so surprised at how seamless the whole process was and how natural it felt after the first couple of nervous attempts. Since then I have attended online meetings and felt the same there. Seeing familiar faces and hearing familiar voices filled me with happiness and plugged me right back into AA again. The technology we have at our disposal today is a lifeline and I can't think of a more apt time to use it.

In the past if I had been in that dark place and then had a global health crisis occur I would have fallen right into self-pity, despair and revelled in the justification to drink and give up but today I have AA and the wonderful people in it to thank for the fact things are different.

Life is definitely not full of rainbows and unicorns right now but I'm not going to give up and will keep trudging that road of happy destiny my Higher Power has set out for me.

**Becca**

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**National Helpline Number**

0800 9177 650

**email**

[help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](mailto:help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

**AA website**

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

**AA service website**

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/members>



# The Roundabout Interview

Many thanks to Margaret, Coltness 12 Step Monday 7.30 pm

## **What brought you to AA?**

My life was in tatters because of my drinking. It was destroying me. I was seriously underweight, had eczema, my hair was falling out, my head was frazzled and I couldn't think straight. I was fortunate I was still working but I didn't have the wherewithal to do my job well. I tried not drinking till 9pm, changing my drink, not going to the pub at lunchtime, limiting the number of drinks but all those attempts to control my drinking failed miserably. When a friend said he was going to go to AA and asked me to accompany him to a meeting to support him I agreed. I thought I'd go along, listen and maybe hear something that would help me.

## **Was there one thing that made you realise you had a problem with drink?**

Not one thing though I knew I had a problem as I was drinking more than family or friends and often at the most inopportune moments. I knew that whenever I drank it would eventually end in disaster but I simply could not stop and stay stopped.

## **Did you know about AA and if so, how?**

I vaguely knew it existed but I didn't know anything about it or the illness of alcoholism.

## **How did you contact AA?**

My friend phoned the AA Helpline and found out there was a meeting in Cockburn St, Edinburgh.

## **What do you remember about your first meeting?**

We were met at the door and asked which one of us was the alcoholic. I replied "Both of us". When I said those words the weight of the world seemed to have been lifted from my shoulders. I'd never said that to anyone before.

It was a 'closed' AA meeting which meant it was only for alcoholics or for those who think they have a drinking problem as opposed to an 'open' AA meeting where nonalcoholics are welcome. If I'd said I was only there to support my friend the outcome would have been different. We were taken into a backroom, given newcomer packs, told that it was a Programme of total abstinence and that AA members would help us. I cried all the way through the meeting. It was the doorman's seventh AA birthday and I thought that was miraculous. I was told not to lift the first drink when I got home and until now, 28 years later, one day at a time, I haven't.

**What was your initial impression of AA?**

I liked it from the get-go. The camaraderie, the support and the unconditional love from strangers was amazing. It was quite overwhelming.

**Was there anything you didn't like about AA at first?**

Only the wee smoky room where the meeting was held but that didn't stop me coming back. I lived out in the sticks and I realised that I needed a car, so I got one and went to meetings all over. There were some meetings I preferred and I gravitated to them. One of them was the Mid-Calder Saturday group and I joined it very quickly. I liked what they said even though I didn't understand what they said and didn't know why it was I liked it. Only later did I realise why I liked the meetings I liked. It was because the focus was on living sober and recovering from the illness of alcoholism rather than on drinking.

**Do you have a favourite AA slogan or phrase?**

I like it when someone explains a slogan and not just voices it as a platitude. A phrase I often say to myself that I heard in AA is '...the troubles ahead of us are never as great as the Power behind us.'

**What, in particular, made a difference for you?**

I got a sponsor and got on the Programme within a few weeks of coming to AA. After all, if you have a heart attack you don't lie about in the corridor of a hospital and just wait till you get better. Someone at my group had a peaceful aura about them that was the result of working the Programme and after putting it off for a week or two for fear of rejection I asked them for help. They said yes straight away and thanked me for asking. I felt rotten and unworthy and being thanked for something meant a lot to me. We met up regularly and went through the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. It revolutionised my life. Sharing about myself, taking inventory and making structured amends were all new to me. There were so many elephants in the room, so much in my life I was frightened about and too scared to speak of. The Programme gave me the gift of sharing; the ability to share how I was feeling. It enabled me to stay happily sober. I was apprehensive of Step Five in case my sponsor wouldn't like me not realising that a sponsor is there to listen and hear; not to judge. I knew I needed to change and I knew where I wanted to be but without knowing where I was I didn't know what to change. Steps Four and Five showed me the broken bits of me and what I needed to change to get where I wanted to be.

**How do you feel you have changed?**

I live by the principles inherent in the Programme – love, honesty, integrity, hope, courage, patience, tolerance, kindness, all the spiritual qualities that I aspired to before but could never attain. Not only do I do that, I am able to say that

about myself. I'm aware today of my good points and my not so good points. I'm softer and less narrow-minded in the way I interact with others. I can take time to understand why someone is doing something differently from the way I would do it. I can show my vulnerability without being scared. I know it's alright not to know. Thanks to the Programme I've got a God in my heart that is personal to me. I asked my sponsor "Why am I not drinking?" and the reply was "Maybe God, your Higher Power has done that." My sponsor also told me that God works through people and he would work through me. That I would become a channel for God and that's what has happened. Me, who was convinced when I was drinking that I was worthless. Me, who just wanted to fade away from life, now looks forward to every day!

**What has AA done for your family?**

It's given my family peace of mind and the ability to say 'I love you' to each other and we can hug now too. There is an openness between us and all that has come from me being sober in AA.

**What do you say to a newcomer?**

"If you come to meetings, join a group, get a sponsor and get on the Programme you will have no need to ever drink again." I speak in gentle way but I mean it quite forcefully.

**Has Roundabout played a part in your AA journey?**

Yes, in my early days and it is great to take into hospitals and prisons.

**What does 'putting back into AA' mean to you?**

Absolutely everything. My sponsor said to me, and I say it to all my sponsees, the only thing I ask of you is to pass on to others what has been freely given to you. Sponsorship and my home group are the main ways I put back but I have also done service in prisons, hospitals and intergroup. As soon as I was long enough sober to be eligible I did the AA Helpline, I couldn't wait. Service is crucial to the maintenance of my sobriety and it's vital to keep AA going.

**Anything else you'd like to add?**

It's easy to think that once you start to get well you'll stay well but that doesn't always happen so it's important not to slip away from AA and the home group. I want contented not demented sobriety so I'll stay here.

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### Points To Ponder

“Believe more deeply. Hold your face up to the Light, even though for the moment you do not see.”

*(As Bill Sees It, pg 3)*



## My Survival Tool Kit

My name is Robert and I'm an alcoholic. I consider myself one of the fortunates in the Fellowship. I thank God I have been living this Programme for years. It has ensured my sanity during these troubled times.

I have been self isolating for a spell because I have a sore throat, cough and some other symptoms. For a man used to being out and about all the time it has been difficult but I have coped quite well.

What it has brought home to me is the value of having sincere friends, group members, AA literature and online contact, not to mention a Power greater than me. All of this has kept me positive, sane and sober. It is proof beyond doubt that this Programme works and will continue to work, ODAAT, if I live it. Take care and stay safe my friends.

God bless.

**Robert**

***Drybridge Wednesday***

### IT'S EASIER THAN EVER NOW TO SEND US AN ARTICLE

Visit our national website at:

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

and navigate through AA Members Area > Fellowship Magazines >  
Roundabout Magazine > Roundabout Flyer > this link.

Type your  
article directly into the blank field then click 'Submit Article'.



## Recovering For Myself, Not By Myself

Hi, it's Michael here.

We seem to be having a younger generation of folk coming. They are a different type of problem drinker. They seem to progress quicker due to drinking at any time. After the pubs shut they carry on to clubs and dance clubs. I'm glad I got in with my generation.

There are so many ideas today about not stopping and weaning off it. I've never heard of anyone dying coming off it but plenty by staying on it. Many of us folk want others to do it for us. We must do this Programme for ourselves but not by ourselves. Without accepting this information we have no chance or very little, because without help it is too much for us, as I found out. I was always going to do it the Frank Sinatra way.

This never worked till I got asked to go to a meeting in Greenock 38 years ago. Then I began to learn that the buck stops with me, not anyone else, one day at a time.

**Michael**  
***Greenock St Laurence's Saturday***

# Death, Insanity or Prison

By the end of my drinking I know what I favoured!

AA saved me and gave me a life which was yes, beyond my wildest dreams, for the things that it's given and those that it's taken away. At 25 it wasn't the place I wanted to be – my life was over! Little did I know it was just the beginning of something beautiful.

My drinking took off at 14 and with it came trouble, chaos, police and hospitals....drinking on the way and at school and being in places/situations I should never have been near. Before I was 15, I was removed to children's homes. Due to family illness my parents were then out of my life till I was 21. By 15 I was spoken to about AA and by 18 alcohol had brought pubs, blackouts, wet beds and violence into my life... and I really didn't care. My first detox was at 17 and by 19 alcohol dependency sickness had come into my life. I had no shame handing my notice(?) to my boss. My drinking was never social or fun – always for effect – by this time it was need not want!

At 21 I called AA, I had a visit and agreed to go to a meeting the next day....by the next day I wasn't that bad and there was no need. The next four years of active drinking brought a baby into my life – I couldn't look after me never mind a child! I suffered paranoia, tremors, and hallucinations...I was beat, I couldn't go on. I was under so many services and my child on the At Risk Register, but I still couldn't see that alcohol was at the root of my problems – it was just a pathetic life.

Three detoxes later, only the last one I left dry, my journey into AA began again through the helpline. That was almost 17 years ago. I've made every mistake in that time. I hung on to the corner of the towel, believing that some day I would be able to drink normally - that took me out days after my first birthday. AA never left my side and are still here. I've buried friends who didn't make it back. A day at a time, by the grace of God and the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous I will celebrate 16 years. Today my life is good, not without its problems, but those I can handle with support and guidance. My 18 year old has never seen his mother drink. The obsession and compulsion to drink left me long ago. I am a grateful alcoholic today.

**Nicola  
Elderslie**

Below, an article first published in The Grapevine magazine, August, 1995.

AUGUST 1995

## Reach Out and Touch Someone

BY: BOB P. | TUCSON, ARIZONA

**Separated by many miles, these AAs had a three-way meeting over the telephone**

I was nervous. I had been to nearly two thousand Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, but this was going to be one of the most unusual. It would be small; there were only three of us. I'd known Chuck for years, but I'd only met Vicki once. Was this thing really going to work?

Vicki had been sober for years and was very active in AA. Recovering from a physical illness, she'd been home from the hospital only a short time and had been given strict orders to take it easy. When I had phoned her to set up the meeting time, she frankly said that she really needed one.

I dialed Chuck's number. It was chaos at his place. People were working on repairs to his house after a burglary. At first he wanted to postpone the meeting, but he decided to move into the back room and give it a try. I pressed down on the receiver button and heard the reassuring three beeps. I called Vicki. When she answered the phone, I pressed down again. All right! We were separated by miles, each in our own homes, but all three of us were on line together.

After brief introductions, we got started. We opened the meeting with the Serenity Prayer. As I read the Preamble, I began to settle down. Soon I wasn't nervous anymore. I asked Chuck to read the beginning of "How It Works." Vicki read the Twelve Traditions on page 564.

We were concerned that when a person is sick, there might be a natural tendency to focus on that particular illness rather than on recovery from alcoholism, so we had worked up a meeting format based on a Big Book study group we went to. To reduce the temptation to cross talk, we had a line in the format that said: "Each person is encouraged to speak once on the selection. Please do not speak twice until everyone has had an opportunity to share." Having a clear format and keeping the meeting firmly anchored to the Big Book helped us stick to our primary purpose. We wanted it to be as much like a face-to-face meeting as possible. About the only thing we couldn't do in the usual way was pass the basket.

I read a couple of paragraphs from "More About Alcoholism." I asked Chuck to comment, then Vicki and I each took a turn. We all had a chance to add a P.S., and we closed with a familiar prayer.

The meeting had lasted about half an hour. There was a short "meeting after the meeting." We all remarked how much like a regular AA meeting it was. It was definitely not the same as when two people are talking on the phone.

When I told them I would be writing to the Grapevine, Vicki and Chuck asked me to include some of their thoughts. Chuck said, "Maybe the original motive was to help Vicki, but that day I really needed a meeting. I had a terrific resentment about my house being robbed. For that half hour, I was able to be someplace else." And Vicki said, "Just talking about it brings a tear to my eye. It was a godsend. I couldn't drive, and I hadn't been to a meeting for ...well, too long. Isolation is dangerous for an alcoholic."

In the years since that first one, we've held phone meetings for a lot of different reasons. Some of us were recovering from physical ailments and soon made it back to regular meetings. Others have been homebound for months or years. We haven't used the phone meeting with someone who is very new; for them, no doubt, a face-to-face meeting is best. But for AA members who have been around a while, we've found that a phone meeting can sometimes be better than a visit for people who are sick. Getting themselves and their homes ready for visitors can be too much for them.

As for me, the phone meetings have been great. I look at them as another payment on the insurance against a slip. It has meant a small, fixed, monthly charge on my phone bill, but I get unlimited local three-way calls. I think it's worth it to be able to have a meeting any time I need one. Getting drunk would cost me a lot more.

Recently, because two of us have three-way calling, we had a four-person meeting. I found it helped to visualize them sitting at a table with me. We just took turns going around the imaginary circle.

Writing that last sentence just now made me think of a sentence at the end of "Bill's Story" in the Big Book. I looked it up and it says: "Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men."



## Who-o-o Me?



## Stay Sober, Stay Safe

The last two weeks have been a roller coaster for me and I suspect, for most of us. The group I'm in called a group conscience meeting to discuss our physical meeting and who could make it. Already some of the older members and some with health issues were not turning up. We decided, for the moment, to go online so that our real meeting was still going but was just temporarily online.

I talked with a dear friend after the meeting and told him of a great idea I'd had. Do a walking meeting with a couple of other members. Take the dog, enjoy the countryside and dose up on AA. Stay well apart, no coffee shop after and we'd be on to a winner!

My friend liked my idea so much he suggested I write to Roundabout and spread the word to others... and so I did! I hadn't written an article for many a year and was delighted when I had an email back thanking me for my article.

One week later and we're all told to isolate. My head went into turmoil. How will I cope! I then received another email from Roundabout 'Your article is now out of date. Can you please expand on it a little?'

So here we are. One week into lockdown and I am coping. Whenever I do a main chair, I always mention a key line for me and my faith '... all will be well' and it is. I have been involved with setting up three online meetings. I've done two main chairs and I've also attended online meetings across the world. Throughout the

day my phone doesn't stop. AA has wrapped a blanket around me as it always does when I need it... and we all need it right now.

Newcomers and the more elderly members are still a large part of my thoughts and prayers. I'm no spring chicken myself and I know how afraid some members are of getting online. It's not too difficult; a five minute chat on the phone, talking them through set up and they're off. Seeing their faces amongst all the little boxes on my screen each day in a meeting is a joy.

I've never experienced a global pandemic on this scale whilst in sobriety. In my drinking days I wouldn't have given a damn. Locking me away for a few months with a dozen cases of vodka would have been an attractive proposition.

Thank God for this Programme. One day at a time I can do this but it is very real. My sponsor is critically ill in intensive care with the virus. Please pray for him, for each other and for all those on the front line in hospitals globally.

God bless.

**Brett**  
**Alcester**

*Submit your article to [roundabout@aamail.org](mailto:roundabout@aamail.org)*



*"My sponsor says I don't change when I see the light,  
I change when I feel the heat!"*

# That Was The Week That Was

**Monday:** I knew it was coming; I suppose we all did. Lockdown! How surreal. This is a change that I don't think I'm going to take to easily. For over 23 years I've been blessed, given where I live, to decide on any given night, by 7.30pm whether I want to go or need to go to a meeting and off I go, arriving in plenty of time for an 8pm start. Whether I like it or not I have to accept this change.

**Tuesday:** Like the majority of meetings up and down the country my home group meeting is cancelled tonight. My service trip to York at the weekend has been cancelled. The region meeting the week after that has been cancelled. My heart is breaking for the newcomer. Where will they go? I'm struggling to get my head around this. I pray and will continue to pray for the newcomer. May they survive until we are able to open our doors again.

**Wednesday:** I have always loved the meetings. I love seeing old and new friends and I take strength from identification that reminds me I am no longer alone. For today and probably for many, many more days to come I will be unable to partake of this 'arm' of my recovery. I thank God that many years ago I found a sponsor who, with patience and tolerance, lovingly took me through the 12 Step Recovery Programme and then guided me as I wove it into my way of living.

**Thursday:** Someone I have known for as many years as I have been on the planet passed away today. Forgiveness, both the ability to give it and the willingness to receive it is a blessing. May I suggest it is a blessing we should not overlook or take for granted. Neither should we leave it until tomorrow.

**Friday:** Tonight, my spirits lifted as I was privileged to take part in an online service meeting, scheduled because of the cancellation of said meeting in York. Was it the same as meeting up with my AA colleagues? No, of course it wasn't but it was the next best thing. The live show has been temporarily suspended and I just thank my God that years ago I was introduced to service work and have never given it up. I was told it would enhance my sobriety. Today it is a tool in my 'sobriety tool box'; a much used and trusted tool.

**Saturday:** My home group, now six members in number, took to the internet tonight and had our meeting online. Whilst it felt great to see all of their faces I missed the hugs, the cuppa and the wee one to one chats before the meeting. For this alcoholic, online meetings will never, ever be as comforting and rewarding as getting out there and mixing with our people.

**Sunday:** Thank goodness I have a Higher Power, the Programme and my service work. What a year this week has been!

**God bless  
CWG**

## **AN INVITATION TO YOUNG MEMBERS and MEMBERS YOUNG IN SOBRIETY**

Roundabout would like to hear from young people who are living sober thanks to AA. What are the challenges? What are the benefits? Send your experiences to the email address below so that other young people who may have a problem can benefit from your experience.

Roundabout would also like to remind Fellowship members that they should never consider themselves 'not long enough sober' to contribute to our magazine. If you are sober today and grateful for that then please write and share.

**[roundabout@aamail.org](mailto:roundabout@aamail.org)**

**Why not take out a subscription to Roundabout today?  
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## **THE MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION**

**Sobriety is the most important thing in your life without exception. You may believe that your job or your home life or some other things come first but consider:  
if you do not get sober and stay sober, the chances are you won't have a job, a family, sanity or even life.  
If you are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety, you have just so much more chance of getting sober and staying sober. If you put other things first, you are only hurting your chances.**

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# THE TWELVE CONCEPTS OF WORLD SERVICE

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The General Service Conference of AA has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.
3. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of AA – the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees and executives – with a traditional “Right of Decision.”
4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation”, allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
5. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.
7. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the AA purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.
9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.
10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
11. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of AA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote and, wherever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

# THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

**GOD**  
*grant me the*  
**SERENITY**  
*to accept the things*  
*I cannot change,*  
**COURAGE**  
*to change the things I can*  
*and*  
**WISDOM**  
*to know the difference*

Scan here to explore the  
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